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C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 000525

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF AND AF/E  
STATE ALSO PASS DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE AND USAID  
PARIS FOR NEARY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/11/2014  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [DJ](#)  
SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI'S AGRICULTURE MINISTER OPTIMISTIC ON  
FUTURE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Classified By: MARGUERITA D. RAGSDALE.  
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) During Ambassador's March 30 courtesy call on Minister of Agriculture Dini Abdallah Bililis, Bililis expressed gratitude for USAID funding of a livestock marketing/health certification facility and food security programs. He also expressed appreciation for the assistance of Camp Lemonier and the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, especially in the area of water resource development. On the latter, he stressed the importance of program coordination with his Ministry to balance projects among donors.

12. (C) The Minister stated that although Djibouti is arid, agriculture could be developed with abundant water. Desalinization of may be the best source, and Lac Assal might benefit most, he added. According to the Minister, studies to determine Djibouti's agricultural potential are being undertaken with the help of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), but with a very small funding amount of USD 10,000. More funding to study Djibouti's potential for agricultural development is needed, the Minister stated.

13. (C) Current Djiboutian "farming", the Minister continued, consists of small "orchards" in different areas of the country, such as in Assamo, As-Eyla, Bankoualeh and Randa, where vegetables and fruits are currently grown. He said he realizes that overall development of agriculture in Djibouti is a real challenge, but that his government plans to move in "step by step" fashion toward that end, beginning with reinforcement of existing farming capabilities. According to Bililis, a plan is afoot for a donor round table with Djibouti, Morocco, the Islamic Development Bank and FAO to secure necessary financing of a meaningful agricultural development program.

14. (C) Bililis also confirmed Djibouti's keenness to develop its fisheries industry with help from the African Development Bank. There is the need to protect that industry. Djibouti's Fisheries Code, he continued, aims more at guarding Djibouti's waters from foreign fishing vessels primarily from Yemen and Egypt than at facilitating a fisheries industry. However, the South African Development Bank is planning to develop a shrimp farm in Godoria, he said. The Minister expressed disappointment in an Iranian investor who had promised to equip the existing port of Djibouti with modern fishing laboratories, but who ultimately failed to perform.

15. (C) Comment: The human resource and financial costs of agricultural development in the absence of a large market, and the lack of skills in sustained agricultural production, are the greatest handicaps to full agricultural development in Djibouti despite Bililis's optimism. End comment.  
RAGSDALE